

Senate Resolution No. 14

Introduced by Senator Hall

Relative to the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday and the Selma Voting Rights Movement

WHEREAS, March 7, 2015, will mark 50 years since the brave Foot Soldiers of the Selma Voting Rights Movement first attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery on Bloody Sunday in protest against the denial of their right to vote and were brutally assaulted by Alabama state troopers; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 1964, members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee attempted to register African Americans to vote throughout the State of Alabama; and

WHEREAS, These efforts were designed to ensure that every American citizen would be able to exercise their constitutional right to vote and have their voices heard; and

WHEREAS, By December of 1964, many of these efforts remained unsuccessful. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., working with leaders from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, began to organize protests throughout Alabama; and

WHEREAS, On March 7, 1965, over 500 voting rights marchers, known as Foot Soldiers, gathered on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, in peaceful protest of the denial of their most sacred and constitutionally protected right—the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, Led by John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Rev. Hosea Williams of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, these Foot Soldiers began the march towards the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, As the Foot Soldiers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were confronted by a wall of Alabama state troopers who brutally attacked and beat them; and

WHEREAS, Americans across the country witnessed this tragic turn of events as news stations broadcast the brutality on a day that would be later known as Bloody Sunday; and

WHEREAS, Two days later, on Tuesday, March 9, 1965, nearly 2,500 Foot Soldiers led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., risked their lives once more and attempted a second peaceful march starting at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. This second attempted march was later known as Turnaround Tuesday; and

WHEREAS, Fearing for the safety of these Foot Soldiers who received no protection from federal or state authorities during this second march, Dr. King led the marchers to the base of the Edmund Pettus Bridge and stopped. Dr. King kneeled and offered a prayer of solidarity and walked back to the church; and

WHEREAS, Lyndon B. Johnson, inspired by the bravery and determination of these Foot Soldiers and the atrocities they endured, announced his plan for a voting rights bill aimed at securing the precious right to vote for all citizens during an address to Congress on March 15, 1965; and

WHEREAS, On March 17, 1965, one week after Turnaround Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Frank M. Johnson ruled that the Foot Soldiers had a First Amendment right to petition the government through peaceful protest and ordered federal agents to provide full protection to the Foot Soldiers during the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March; and

WHEREAS, Judge Johnson's decision overturned Alabama Governor George Wallace's prohibition on the protest due to public safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, On March 21, 1965, under the court order, the U.S. Army, the federalized Alabama National Guard, and countless federal agents and marshals escorted nearly 8,000 Foot Soldiers from the start of their heroic journey in Selma, Alabama, to their safe arrival on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol Building on March 25, 1965; and

WHEREAS, The extraordinary bravery and sacrifice these Foot Soldiers displayed in pursuit of a peaceful march from Selma to Montgomery brought national attention to the struggle for equal voting rights, and served as the catalyst for Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which President Johnson signed into law on August 6, 1965; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Selma Voting Rights Movement and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, it is befitting for the California State Senate to commemorate March 7, 2015, in honor of the Foot Soldiers who participated in Bloody Sunday,

Turnaround Tuesday, or the final Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March during March of 1965, which served as a catalyst for the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate provide copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

Senate Resolution No. 14 read and adopted by the Senate March 9, 2015.

Attest: _____
Secretary of the Senate